Doctrine of the Priesthood

Let Virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy Confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the Doctrine of the Priesthood shall Distil upon thy soul as the Dews from Heaven. (D & C 121:45)

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The Church of the Firstborn
and
The Holy Order of God

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Introduction

Most students of the Restored Gospel are aware that the "Church of the Firstborn" is the proper name of the Celestial Church, or that Church which exists in the Celestial Kingdom. Yet this notwithstanding, very few are aware of the fact that the Prophet Joseph Smith *Formally Organized* and *Restored* the Church of the Firstborn as a viable organization here on earth — and that it was a Church which was to be *sought after* and *joined* by mortals during their sojourn in mortality. Indeed, in accordance with the History of the Prophet Joseph Smith, this Celestial Church was an inherient part of the *"Restoration of All Things"*.

As established by Joseph Smith, the Church of the Firstborn was possessed of a Priesthood Order and Hierarchy which was unique to itself, together with a special set of Ordinances, Laws and Doctrinal Precepts, all of which were Fundamental to the nature of its own Calling and Organization. Not only so, but in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet, Obedience to these Ordinances and Doctrinal Precepts was Required, if one was to avail himself of Exaltation in the Highest Degree of Glory in the Celestial Kingdom.

This then constitutes the focus of this issue of *Doctrine of the Priesthood* — an introduction to the fact that the Prophet did organize the Church of the Firstborn here on Earth — and that this Celestial Church is distinct and set apart from the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

The Priesthood is the Channel

[The] priesthood . . . is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven. . . . . It is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the beginning of the creation of the earth, and through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known his purposes to the end of time. (***Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*** 166–167)

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Fred C. Collier

The Purpose of
The Church of the Firstborn

Membership in the Church of the Firstborn and a knowledge of the opportunities and responsibilities which are associated therewith are essential if man is to avail himself of all that God has offered him in this life.

Man is that he might have joy! It is the ultimate desire of all mankind to obtain a fulness of joy in their existence. In the eternities of the past it was discovered that a fulness of joy was the harvest of Exaltation, that Exaltation can be won only through Organization, and that Organization required Government. It was in fulfillment of the needs of organization and government and as a solution to the problems encountered in the path of progress that the Church of the Firstborn and its governing authority were established in the Eternities of the Past. The Church of the Firstborn was established to Organize and thus Exalt man, that

he might obtain a Fullness of Joy in his Existence, and it is in fulfillment to these basic desires that this Church exists today both in Heaven and on Earth.

How can a man see except he have eyes?
How can he seek that which he has not conceived?
How can he achieve unknown ambitions?
Joy is no accident, but the prize of lifes struggle!

It is the purpose of this series concerning the Church of the Firstborn to convey a clear understanding thereof, thus furnishing food for thought and prayer, that those who are prepared might obtain a personal testimony of the truthfulness and importance of these things.

The Church of the Firstborn is Not Another Name for the Church of Jesus Christ

A great deal of controversy exists over what is meant when the scriptures refer to the Church of the Firstborn. Many have supposed it to be another name for the Church of Jesus Christ, as in the scriptures Christ has been declared the Firstborn (D&C 93:21; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15–18). Still others have confused the issue even more by assigning the ordinances of the one church to the other, thus they have failed to comprehend the need for the other church and the full opportunities which the Father has offered to man on this earth if he would obey his laws.

Those who are more informed however, know this to be incorrect; that these two names not only refer to different organizations, but that their missions are also different. That they have the same ultimate goal may be said in truth, even as the Father and the Son are one in purpose; yet still these two beings are separate and each has a different mission to perform in the accomplishment of their ultimate goal. Even so it is with these two churches. As Christ's mission is to bring man again into the presence of the Father, so the Church of Christ is to prepare man for the higher opportunities of Exaltation offered in the Church of the Father. In short, the Church of Christ was established to prepare the saints for membership in the Church of the Firstborn, which is the Celestial organization that will stand in eternity.

For many it is hard to accept the idea that God would sanction the existence of two distinct organizations. They do not see any purpose in God having more than one church which he would honor and call

his own. but this is because they do not understand the nature of the difference between these two orders or churches.

Their difference, when coupled with their unity of purpose do not conflict, but instead serve as a compliment to each other, with each church helping to fulfill the divine purpose of the other.

Those who refuse to believe that the Church of the Firstborn is a separate church from the Church of Christ often refer to a verse in the Book of Mormon:

> Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth. (1st Nephi 14:10)

Those who use this scripture go to great lengths to show how plainly it states that there is only one church of God, but they neglect to realize that just as this scripture says there is only one church of God, it also says there is only one church of the Devil. Yet we all know that there are many different churches that would fit into this latter category. They go by different names and often refuse to acknowledge the authority of the others, and in the most literal sense of the word they are each a separate and distinct church from the others. But all of these separate organizations may be classed in one of two groups. They are either of God, or of the Devil. If God does not acknowledge it as His church, then we may rest assured that the Devil will sponsor it as his. But now the question arises, while there are many churches which will be classified in this one group as being of the Devil, is there to be one only to qualify in that group as being of God? We must conclude that the scripture quoted above does not say this, and there are other scriptures which teach differently.

Contained in the New Testament is a record of the ministry of Christ, and also of a church which he established. He ordained twelve apostles and other officers for this church and after Christ was gone Peter became the head of the Church and was directed by revelation from heaven.

After Christ had ascended into heaven, he came down to the Nephites and set up another church as is recorded in the Book of Mormon in 3rd Nephi. Christ ordained twelve disciples, gave them the necessary authority and instructions and then left them to carry on the work which he had called them to do. These twelve disciples governed the Church by direct revelation from heaven. They had no communication

from Peter, James and John on the other continent and thus we have two organizations on the earth at the same time, both separate from each other and yet still of God. Actually they were the same church for they were both the Church of Christ, but each was independent from the other. When Christ appeared to the Nephites he also spoke of other peoples which he must visit, to whom he would bring the gospel:

> And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he said unto those twelve whom he had chosen: Ye are my disciples; and ye are a light unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of Joseph. And behold, this is the land of your inheritance; and the Father hath given it unto you. *And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem. Neither at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell unto them concerning the other tribes of the house of Israel, whom the Father hath led away out of the land.* This much did the Father command me, that I should tell unto them: That other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. And now, because of stiffneckedness and unbelief they understood not my word; therefore I was commanded to say no more of the Father concerning this thing unto them. But, verily, I say unto you that the Father hath commanded me, and I tell it unto you, that ye were separated form among them because of their iniquity; therefore it is because of their iniquity that they know not of you. And verily, I say unto you again that the *other tribes hath the Father separated from them; and it is because of their iniquity that they know not of them*. And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching. And they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice — that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost. . . . . And verily, verily, I say unto you that *I have other sheep which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of that land round about whither I have been to minister. For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them. But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them,* and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them. (3rd Nephi 15:11–23, 16:1–3)

We may assume then that Christ not only set up a church among the Nephites on the American continent and among the Jews at Jerusalem but also that there were other peoples that he must visit among whom he would also establish a church. The scriptures inform us that John the Beloved is among the lost tribes of Israel preparing them for their return and they would also have the priesthood and a church. It is obvious from the above quote that these churches would be completely independent of the others which were already established. We can see from this that while in one sense there is only one church of God, in another sense there are many. As far as organizations are concerned, from what we can learn, the determining factors are whether they exemplify the true principles of the Gospel and do they have the Priesthood or the authority to act in the name of God?

So far we have merely been discussing the fact that there may be more than one organization of the "Church of Jesus Christ" upon the earth at the same time. But in the examples which have been given it is apparent that the reason these organizations were separate was because of their geographical separation. The distance between these countries was so great and the natural boundaries (the sea) made it necessary for these churches to be separate. This would seem to be the main reason for their separation. Today however this problem has in large measure been alleviated. Modern technology has made communication between the Old and New worlds a simple matter, thus the need for a separation of organizations on this basis is done away.

We have been talking about there being more than one of the same kind of organization (i.e. the Church of Jesus Christ) being in existence upon the earth at the same time, the main reason being separation by natural boundaries. Now we are going to discuss the separation of two churches both of which are of God, with the separation being upon another basis. The reason being that they are not the same type of organization. While they are both of God, and have the same ultimate purpose, they do not serve the same function. They are one in purpose but not in organization. They were both established to help man fulfill his destiny, but each plays a different role in that goal, as do the Father and Son.

The scriptures make it plain that the Church of the Firstborn is not the Church of Jesus Christ. When Christ appeared to the Nephites and set up his church he commanded them to call the church after his name. The following are the words of the Savior on this occasion:

Therefore ye shall call the church in my name . . . and how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel. (3rd Nephi 27:7–8)

The command which the Lord gave to the Nephites was again reiterated in this dispensation in a revelation given to Joseph Smith:

Verily thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. . . . *thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.* (D&C 115:1, 4)

The name by which Christ's church should be called is given in great plainness in the scriptures, that it should be named after Christ even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Yet still we find reference in the scriptures to a church which goes by another name, (i.e. the Church of the Firstborn).

Probably all of our readers are familiar with the Church of Jesus Christ. We are acquainted with the nature of its organization and understand its basic principles, but what is the "Church of the Firstborn"? For most when they hear the name of this church a blank appears in their mind. They do not know anything about its function, the nature of its organization, its priesthood or ordinances. It is the object of the following series to explain these things.

The scriptures associate the Church of the Firstborn in a most powerful and dramatic way with Celestial glory, and with God the Father and His Work. The following are some of these scriptures:

We, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the Spirit on the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two — By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God . . . and this is the testimony of the gospel . . . concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just . . . .

They are they who are the ***Church of the Firstborn***. They are they into whose hands **THE FATHER** has given all things — They are they who are *priests* and *kings*, WHO HAVE RECEIVED OF HIS FULNESS, AND OF HIS GLORY; And are priests of the Most High after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Where-

fore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God — Wherefore . . . they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. *And they . . . shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.* These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people. These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection . . . . These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all. These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood. These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, EVEN THE GLORY OF **GOD**, THE HIGHEST OF ALL . . . these are they who are . . . of THE **CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN** WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE FULNESS **OF THE FATHER** . . . And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things — WHERE **GOD**, EVEN THE **FATHER**, reigns upon his throne forever and ever; Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever. *They who dwell in his presence are* **THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN** . . .[1]

Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings THE FATHER hath in his own hands and prepared for you; And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours. And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more. Wherefore, do the things which I have commanded you, saith your Redeemer, even the Son Ahman, who prepareth all things before he taketh you; For ye are THE **CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN**.[2]

Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of Promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John. This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom; Which glory is that of THE **CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN**, EVEN OF **GOD**, THE HOLIEST OF ALL, through Jesus Christ His Son.[3]

The scriptures make it clear that the Church of the Firstborn, along with its laws, doctrines, ordinances, and Priesthood, constitute the Celestial

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[1] D&C 76:11–12, 50, 54–71, 92–94
[2] D&C 78:17–21
[3] D&C 88:3–5

order of life, and in so doing they help one to understand the difference between the Church of the Firstborn and the Church of Jesus Christ. The function of the Church of Jesus Christ was to prepare the saints for the higher blessings of exaltation which were to be obtained in the Church of the Firstborn.

Perhaps none have made this distinction between the Church of Jesus Christ and the Church of the Firstborn plainer than did Joseph Fielding Smith. The following are his words on this matter:

> Who among us wants to be satisfied by merely entering the Celestial Kingdom? The Lord did not say that baptism would exalt us. Are we going to be satisfied with merely an entrance? Evidently there are many members of the Church who are going to be so satisfied, because they will not prepare themselves, or do not prepare to receive the exaltation. What will happen to those who are baptized, who are satisfied thus far? They will enter into that kingdom to be servants, to wait upon those who are worthy of a far more and exceeding weight of glory. The Lord says they will be angels, ministering servants, but they will not be Gods, and that will be their destiny, for he says it will endure worlds without end. So we cannot be satisfied merely with baptism. The Lord expects us to be worthy to go on and receive the fulness of his kingdom, to be clothed with the power of perfection and become like him. That can only be done by observing the ordinances and receiving the covenants in the house of the Lord, each of us individually . . .[4] Do you desire to enter into the Celestial Kingdom and receive eternal life? Then be willing to keep all the commandments the Lord may give you. Baptism and confirmation are the ordinances by which we come into the kingdom of God. But these ordinances of themselves will not grant us a place of exaltation!
>
> Each person baptized into the Church is under obligation to keep the commandments of the Lord . . . . . When he has proved himself by a worthy life, having been faithful in all things required of him, then it is his privilege to receive other covenants and to take upon himself other obligations *which will make of him an* **HEIR**, AND HE WILL BECOME A MEMBER OF THE "**CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN**."[5] The Lord speaks in . . . the revelations of the Church of the Firstborn. What is the difference, if there is a difference between the Church of the Firstborn and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or of any day saints? Well, the members of the Church of the Firstborn are members of the Church of Jesus Christ, but not all those who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ become members of the Church of the Firstborn . . .[6] As I

[4] *Seek Ye Earnestly* 62

[5] *Seek Ye Earnestly* 147

[6] *Seek Ye Earnestly* 63

understand it, those who become members of the Church of the Firstborn are those who have kept the commandments of the Lord in their fulness. I do not understand that every member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to become a member of the Church of the Firstborn; for there are many who are not willing to walk in the light of truth and continue in God obedient to every ordinance and commandment. These will fall short of this great glory for they have not overcome by faith.[7] Those who gain exaltation in the celestial kingdom are those who are members of the Church of the Firstborn; in other words, those who keep all the commandments of the Lord. There will be many *who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who shall never become members of the Church of the Firstborn*.[8] Brethren and sisters, we cannot be satisfied with just membership in this Church. We should live to be Worthy of and Pray for the Fulness of the Blessings of Our **Father's** Kingdom.[9]

There is no exaltation in the kingdom of God without **the Fulness of the Priesthood**. How could a man be an **Heir** in that kingdom without priesthood? . . . . These blessings are obtained through obedience to the ordinances and covenants of the House of the Lord. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said: "If a man gets **a Fulness of the Priesthood** of God, he has to get it . . . by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord." To obtain the fulness of the priesthood does not mean that a man must become president of the Church. Every Man **who is Faithful** and will Receive These Ordinances and Blessings Obtains a Fulness of the Priesthood, and the Lord has said that "he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion." . . . the Lord has made it possible for every man in this Church, through his obedience, to receive the Fulness of the Priesthood *through the ordinances of the temple* of the Lord. This cannot be received anywhere else.

So being ordained an elder, or a high priest, or an apostle, or even president of the Church, is not the thing that brings the exaltation, but obedience to the laws and the ordinances and the covenants required of those who desire to become members of the **Church of the Firstborn** *as these are administered in the House of the Lord. To become a member of the Church of the Firstborn, as I understand it, is to become one of the inner circle*. We are all members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by being baptized and confirmed, and there are many who seem to be content to remain such without obtaining the privileges of exaltation. *The Lord has made it possible for us to become members of the Church of the Firstborn by receiving the blessings of the House of*

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[7] *Take Heed to Yourselves* 95

[8] *Doctrines of Salvation* Vol. 2:41

[9] *Seek Ye Earnestly* 64

the Lord, and "overcoming all things." Thus we become heirs, "priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory," who shall "dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever," with full exaltation. Are such blessings worth having?

I have said that only one man at a time on the earth holds the keys of this sealing power of priesthood, but he may, and does, delegate power to others and they officiate under his direction in the temples of the Lord. . . . All the authority exercised in the temples, is then, after all, the authority centered in one man. He has the power and calls upon others to officiate and *they seal upon us the keys and powers which, through our obedience, entitle us to become* SONS *and* DAUGHTERS, *and members of the* CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN, *receiving all things in the kingdom. This is what we can get in the temple, so that we become* MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY, SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD, *not servants*.[10]

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN A PART OF THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

That the Church of the Firstborn and the Church of Jesus Christ are two separate churches is made plain beyond disputation for those who accept the words of Joseph Fielding Smith as an authority, but still the confusion continues. Some people are willing to concede that the Church of the Firstborn and the Church of Jesus Christ are two distinct churches, but are unwilling to accept the idea that the Church of the Firstborn would exist on this earth during Mortality. In the writings of some it has been like pie in the sky, so far into the clouds that it is entirely out of reach. These people make it appear that the Church of the Firstborn as an organization exists only in the Celestial kingdom and not on this earth and that therefore it would have no bearing or calling on them in this life.

While it is conceded that the Church of the Firstborn along with its laws, doctrines and ordinances constitute the Celestial way of life, that is by no means grounds for drawing the conclusion that this order of life cannot also be established on this earth to bless our lives here and now during mortality. Heber C. Kimball believed such to be the case. He taught that the Church of the Firstborn was established on this earth by Adam in the very beginning, the same as Adam's father had done on the earth where he lived in mortality, this evidently being a pattern for every earth:

[10] *Take Heed to Yourselves*. 112–114

Let me explain what the **Church of the First Born** is. It is the first Church that ever was raised up upon this earth; that is, the first born Church. That is what I mean; and when **God our Father** Orgaanized that Church, He Organized it Just as His Father Organized the Church on the Earth **where He Dwelt**. (*Journal of Discourses* 5:129)

Now many will be ready to say, "Just because the Church of the Firstborn was established in Adam's day does not mean that it should be established in this dispensation!" Oh yes, but it does mean just that! All the scriptures testify that in this, our day, God would restore *all things* pertaining to the higher law that had been in other dispensations including Adam's. The following are some of Joseph Smith's teachings on this subject:

The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate in and help roll forward the Latter-day glory, "The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, When God will gather together **All Things That Are In Heaven**, *and all things that are upon the earth," "even in one."*[11]

It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, *which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed* **From the Days of Adam even to the Present Time**. And not only this, but **Those Things Which Never Have Been Revealed** From the Foundation of the World, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be Revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, **the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times**.[12]

"Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: *that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ,* **Both which are In Heaven**, *and which are on earth; even in Him.*" (Ephesians 1:9–10)

Now the purpose in Himself in the winding up scene of the last dispensation is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations.[13]

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[11] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 231
[12] D&G 128:18
[13] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 168

All the ordinances and duties that ever have been required by the Priesthood, under the directions and commandments of the Almighty in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last dispensation, *therefore all things had under the authority of the Priesthood at any former period*, **SHALL BE HAD AGAIN, BRINGING TO PASS THE RESTORATION SPOKEN OF BY THE MOUTH OF ALL THE HOLY PROPHETS.**[14]

John Taylor also spoke at considerable length upon this subject. The following are some of his teachings:

Our ideas are, that the time has come to favor God's people; a time about which Prophets spoke in pathetic strains, and poets sung. These men of God looked through the dark vista of future ages, and being wrapped in prophetic vision, beheld the latter day glory — the time of the dispensation of the fulness of times, spoken of by all the holy Prophets since the world began; for they all looked forward with joyful anticipations to the things which have commenced with us . . . .

We have come into this world to accomplish a certain purpose, and we have come in the DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES, *when God decreed to gather all things together into one*, **WHETHER THEY BE THINGS IN HEAVEN OR ON EARTH**; *and everything that has been in existence in any age of the world, or that is, or will be, which is calculated to benefit and exalt man,* WE SHALL HAVE; consequently it is for us to look after anything and everything that ever has been true, or that has ever been developed in any period of the history of man, for it all belongs to us, and has got to be restored, for restitution means bringing back that which is lost. *If the Antediluvians enjoyed anything that was good, true, and eternal, which is not yet made known to us, it has to be restored; or if anything existed* **AMONG THE ANCIENT PATRIARCHS** and Prophets, that has been lost, it has to be restored. (*Journal of Discourses* 1:229, 230)

We occupy a peculiar position on the earth at the present time, perhaps a little different from that of any other people that have existed on the earth — our thoughts, our ideas, our principles, our organization, our doctrines, our ordinances, and everything connected with our religious matters are different from those of other people; and it is our opinion, and not only our opinion, but a certainty — in fact, it amounts to knowledge among a great many of the Latter-day Saints, that the influences and principles that we have received have been communicated to us by the Almighty. *We were not the originators of the principles we believe in; neither was Joseph nor Hyrum Smith, nor President Brigham Young, nor the Twelve;* neither was any individual nor any people associated with the priesthood or the organization of the Church at the present time. We believe that these things have ben communicated to us by the Lord;

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[14] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 171–172

that they are in strict harmony with principles that have existed heretofore, to a certain extent, with this difference however, that in the various dispensations that have existed upon the earth since its formation, each one has had its peculiar role to fulfill, with certain duties devolving upon those operating to attend to. *We are living in the dispensation which is emphatically called* the DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES, which we are informed from the scriptures has been "spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world was;" and this being the case, *the dispensation in which we live embraces necessarily* ALL THAT WAS CONTAINED IN ANY AND ALL OF THE OTHER DISPENSATIONS THAT HAVE EXISTED IN ALL THE AGES PRECEDING OURS; *and that consequently whatever organizations, manifestations, revelations or communications that have ever come from God to the human family in their times and dispensations, we may consistently expect to be embodied in this one.* And, therefore, in some respects, as I stated before, the dispensation or time in which we live differs in many particulars from those in which God has communicated to man.

We have, for instance, what is called the **PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION**, which existed **BEFORE** and **AFTER** the **FLOOD**. . . . . .

The Bible does not give us a very extensive history of these matters; in fact, it is very, very brief. Referring to that great man, Enoch, it tells us that he was not for God took him; and that is all. This is a very short history for so important a subject. . . . . .

. . . Noah steps forward in a prominent position, and he had his work to perform, which he did perform, and began to raise up another seed; and they lived also in what may be termed a **PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION**. And among them were many of his leading posterity. There was Melchizedec, for instance, who was called the King of Salem and the Prince of Peace, of whom Paul makes some curious remarks, among which was that Christ was a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec. If he was, then of course Melchizedec was a priest after the order of Christ. And as Christ introduced the Gospel, so Melchizedec had the Gospel, and had and held and administered in the same priesthood that Jesus did. . . . . .

Associated with this priesthood there were certain powers and privileges. *These Abraham possessed* and enjoyed. . . . . In giving his history he tells us that "He sought for the blessings of the Father and the right whereunto he should be ordained to administer the same." He further says: — "Having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also . . . to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace; and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God I BECAME A RIGHTFUL HEIR, a high priest, HOLDING THE RIGHT BELONGING TO THE FATHERS; *it was conferred upon me from the fathers;* IT CAME DOWN FROM THE FATHERS, from the beginning of time. Yea, even from the beginning, *or before the foundations of the earth,* to the present time,

even the **RIGHT OF THE FIRST-BORN, ON THE FIRST MAN**, who was Adam, our first father, through the fathers unto me." *Times and Seasons*, Vol. iii, p. 704. [Abraham 1:2–4] His father however was an idolator; but had probably possessed a record of his genealogy, for Abraham in his record continues: — "I shall endeavor hereafter to delineate the chronology, running back from myself to the beginning of the creation, for the records have come into my hands, which I hold until the present time." And having found out that HE HAD A RIGHT TO THE PRIESTHOOD, he, therefore, *sought an ordination,* and he was ordained by Melchizedec to the Melchizedec priesthood. And the Lord gave unto him certain privileges and powers that were very great . . . . . And, furthermore, I would state that he went *still further*. He asked God for certain blessings and privileges and powers which belonged to him and which he considered were within his reach, and which were his privilege to obtain. And the Lord revealed himself to him and communicated unto him *certain eternal principles — that no man can comprehend unless God does reveal them* . . . . .

Now, this was the kind of a man that Abraham was. And his heart and feelings and affections were drawn out after God. And God blessed him and said unto him, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee and thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven," &c. And further the Lord told him, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my word." And hence he occupied a very important position. And, as I before said, *being a patriarch he had the gospel and the priesthood belonging to it*, namely, the Melchizedec priesthood. . . . . .

Now, that was a peculiar dispensation; it was under the dispensation that was introduced . . . by Noah . . . . . .

The dispensation of the fulness of times has got to be restored to introduce all that has been spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world was. . . . . *The same Gospel that Adam had,* the same Gospel the *Seth* had, the same Gospel the *Enoch* had, the same Gospel that **NOAH** had, the same Gospel that **ABRAHAM** had, the same Gospel that Jesus had; the Gospel that brings life and immortality to light, and that places men in communion with their Heavenly Father — the everlasting Gospel. . . . . .

*Now, then, all of these dispensations **had** to be restored.* (*Journal of Discourses* 21:241–242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 251–252, 253)

THE RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN

It is apparent then from these statements that if the Church of the Firstborn was established on the earth in the days of Adam, then according to prophecy we may expect it to be restored and functioning in this our day the same as in Adam's. And not only do we expect the Church of the Firstborn which Adam established in his day to be restored, but also the

Church of Jesus Christ which Christ established when he was on earth. Both of these churches as well as the laws and ordinances of each have been on the earth at various times in the ancient past, and according to prophecy they were both to be restored in this dispensation. The Prophet Joseph Smith clarified this in the inspired version of the Bible:

> And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I will establish my covenant with you, which I made unto your father Enoch, concerning your seed after you. . . . . And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the first-born shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch. (Inspired Version, Genesis 9:15, 22–23)

The Church of Jesus Christ was "organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God" on April 6th, 1830 (D&C 20:1; 21:3). But according to Heber C. Kimball the Church of the Firstborn was not restored until a later date in Kirtland, Ohio. President Kimball told of this restoration as follows:

> This people here are the people of God. Here, in the Territory of Deseret, is the **Kingdom of God**, and here are all the *officers pertaining to that kingdom;* and here is an *organization* that is *organized* **After the Order of God**, and it is organized after the Order of **the Church of the First Born**.
>
> Let me explain what the **Church of the Firstborn** is. It is the first Church that ever was raised up upon this earth; that is, the first born Church. That is what I mean; and *when* **God our Father organized that Church**, *He organized it just as* **His Father** *organized the Church on the earth* **Where He Dwelt**; *and that same order is organized here in the City of Great Salt Lake;* and it is that order that Joseph Smith the Prophet of God **Organzed in the Beginning in Kirtland, Ohio**. Brother Brigham Young, myself, and others *were present when that was done;* and when those **Officers** received their **Endowments**, they were Together in One Place. *They were organized,* and received their endowments and blessings, *and* **Those Keys** *were placed upon them, and that* **Kingdom** will Stand Forever.
>
> *Now mark it — that* **Kingdom** *will never be overthrown;* although they may kill, that is, if they can, brother Brigham and me, and brother Daniel H. Wells, *and they may kill the Apostles,* if they can, and so they may keep on from this time to all eternity, and they never can obliterate this work. I know it. They may kill, and destroy, and waste a great many *limbs* that are upon this

Church; but let me tell you, they never can kill the tree nor destroy the root from whence we have sprung; FOR OUR FATHER AND OUR GOD IS THAT ROOT, *and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the tree or vine,* **AND WE SPRING OUT OF THAT VINE.** (*Journal of Discourses* 5:129–130)

For those who want more evidence than the words of Joseph Fielding Smith regarding the separation of the two churches under discussion, the above words of Heber C. Kimball should end all controversy. President Kimball clearly stated that the Church of the Firstborn was established in Kirtland, Ohio. And there is no way that his words can be interpreted as referring to the Church of Christ under another name, for he said the Church he was referring to was organized in Kirtland, Ohio; The Church of Jesus Christ was organized at Fayette, New York and it was not until a later date that there were any saints in Kirtland.

I once met a man who refused to believe that these two churches were separate organizations. When I read him the above discourse he tried to explain it away.

"Well," said he "Apostle Kimball is merely referring to the Church of Christ only under another name." "The scriptures teach that Christ is the Firstborn you know, and so referring to the Church of Christ as the Church of the Firstborn would not be incorrect."

"Well," I answered "let us take a closer look at this discourse. In this discourse President Kimball said, 'Let me explain what the Church of the Firstborn is.' If he was going to explain what the Church of Christ was why didn't he do it? Why didn't he start telling about Apostles and Seventies, Elders and High Priests, Stake Presidents and etc.? Why didn't he tell about Baptism by immersion and the atonement of Christ and the church which Christ set up while on earth? Instead he told of a Church which **GOD THE FATHER** set up at the beginning of this earth's history. If the "Church of the Firstborn" is just another name for the "Church of Jesus Christ" why didn't he take this opportune time to say so, instead of talking about a church that was organized AFTER THE ORDER OF GOD, which he called the 'Church of the Firstborn'? If these are two names for the same organization, why is it that there *is not* one word to that effect in all the sacred scriptures, nor in the teachings of any of the first Prophets of this dispensation including those of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith? Besides all this we have the words of Joseph Fielding Smith which say just the opposite. And why would the scriptures be so explicit in giv-

ing the proper name by which the Church of Christ should be called, and then be guilty of a flagrant violation of its own law, in going by an altogether different name? President Kimball in explaining the Church of the Firstborn did not say a word about the Church of Christ! Instead he spoke of other things. Did he not say that the Church about which he was speaking was organized in Kirtland, Ohio? And we know that the Church of Christ was organized somewhere else don't we?"

"Yes" he said "but he actually meant Fayette, New York. Apostle Kimball said Joseph organized it in the beginning in Kirtland. When he said 'Beginning' he meant New York for that is where the church started. Apostle Kimball merely made a mistake of speech when he said Kirtland."

"If it was a mistake of speech," said I, "the whole discourse must have been one big mistake, for he said in the very next sentence that Brigham Young and himself were present when the church about which he was speaking was organized, and we all know that Brigham and Heber were not among the six men present on April 6th, 1830 when the Church of Christ was organized in New York. In fact those two gentleman did not show their faces around the saints for a few years yet did they? In fact they first met the Prophet Joseph and joined the Church in Kirtland. It seems as though Kirtland was the beginning place for Brigham and Heber, and even when considering church history, the Kirtland period was in the beginning era wasn't it? I can see that there is a possibility that President Kimball could make one mistake like saying Kirtland instead of Nauvoo or something like that, but then to make the mistake of remembering he was there when he was not, which would be the case if he were referring to the organization of the Church of Christ in New York, I think that is trying awful hard. The entire discourse on the Church of the Firstborn would have had no meaning except that he referred to a separate church."

This discourse was given at a time of trouble. The Utah war was in process. Johnston's Army was headed for Utah and it was rumored that they would execute Brigham Young, and his counselors and the Apostles. President Kimball was undoubtedly trying to comfort the saints and preparing them for what might come. He wanted the saints to know that if the government should succeed in what had been rumored and kill all the leaders of the Church who were all public figures, *that there was another* Organization *which the government knew not of, called* "the Church of the Firstborn" *and that there were* Officers *in this Church who had* all the Keys of the Priesthood *and the necessary authority*

to continue the work. That no matter what happened to the leaders of the Church there would still remain at least some of the officers of the Church of the Firstborn who would continue the work. The government could not kill them for they did not know who they were. This same thought was also expressed at another time of crisis by President Kimball. It was after the death of the Prophet Joseph that he said:

> Elder Rigdon after he came from Pittsburg never attended council only when he could not avoid it. He has no authority only what he receives from the Church. . . . . *He was not in the* COUNCIL PERTAINING TO THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD *until just before he started for Pittsburgh*. Brother Phelps was the means of bringing him in, but he has not got the same authority as others; *there are* MORE *than thirty men who have got* HIGHER AUTHORITY *than he has . . . . . There are men here brethren who have got authority, but we don't want to mention their names,* FOR THE ENEMY WILL TRY TO KILL THEM. (*Times & Seasons* 5:663–664)

Here again President Kimball plainly makes reference to the fact that there were men who had keys that no one knew of. And later it shall be clearly demonstrated that the men to whom he referred were the members and officers of the Church of the Firstborn.

In his discourse President Kimball stated that the Church of the Firstborn was organized on the earth in this dispensation by JOSEPH SMITH, never again to be taken away, that there were OFFICERS of that Church who were given "*those Keys*" "*and that Kingdom* will stand forever." I would ask my readers, "Where is that Kingdom? Where are those Keys? Where is that Church?" Look around and answer these questions for yourselves, for if you cannot, then according to the Prophet Joseph you have got problems:

> Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God; but where these are not, the kingdom of God is not. All the ordinances, systems, and administrations on the earth are of no use to the children of men, unless they are ordained and authorized of God; for nothing will save a man but a legal administrator; for none others will be acknowledged either by God or angels.[15] The best men bring forth the best works. *The man who tells you words of life* IS THE MAN WHO CAN SAVE YOU.[16] There could not anything be given, pertaining to life and

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[15] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 274–275

[16] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 358

godliness, without knowledge.[17] Without knowledge we cannot be saved.[18] It is necessary for men to receive an understanding concerning the laws of the heavenly kingdom, before they are permitted to enter it: we mean the celestial glory . . . . the conditions of God's kingdom are such, that all who are made partakers of that glory, are under the necessity of learning something respecting it previous to their entering it.[19] If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses.[20] The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation. This principle can be comprehended by the faithful and diligent; *and everyone that does not obtain knowledge sufficient to be saved will be condemned.*[21] Knowledge is Power; *and the man who has the most knowledge* Has the Greatest Power.[22]

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[17] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. 305
[18] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. 217
[19] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. 51
[20] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 216
[21] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 297
[22] *History of the Church* 5:392

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